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27 March 1969

Central Intelligence Bulletin

CONTENTS

25X1

Chile: President Frei believes the military's
traditionally apolitical attitude has changed.

25X1

25X1

Next 6 Page(s) In Document Exempt

25X1

CHILE: PRESIDENT FREI BELIEVES THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE IN THE TRADITIONALLY APOLITICAL ATTITUDE OF THE CHILEAN MILITARY.

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] FREI HAS TOLD US AMBASSADOR KERRY THAT ON THREE SEPARATE OCCASIONS HIGH-RANKING OFFICERS HAVE SOUNDED OUT HIS CLOSE SUPPORTERS ON HOW FREI WOULD REACT TO A COUP. HE SAID THAT THEY DID NOT WISH TO SEE CHILE UNDER A MARXIST GOVERNMENT, AND THEY FEARED THAT A VICTORY BY CONSERVATIVE FORMER PRESIDENT JORGE ALESSANDRI WOULD PROVOKE LEFTIST REACTION THAT WOULD LEAD TO CLASHES WITH THE POLICE.

FREI HAS INDICATED THAT HE WOULD NEVER APPROVE OF A COUP TO PREVENT EITHER A MARXIST OR ALESSANDRI FROM COMING TO POWER. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT MILITARY DISCONTENT HAS ADVANCED BEYOND THE THINKING AND TALKING STAGE. THE MILITARY ARE, HOWEVER, PROBABLY PRESSING FREI FOR MODERNIZATION OF THEIR EQUIPMENT, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THE UPGRADING OF EQUIPMENT IN NEIGHBORING ARGENTINA AND PERU.

25X1

27 Mar 69

Central Intelligence Bulletin

7

25X1

Next 4 Page(s) In Document Exempt

25X1

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